

Frequently Asked Questions:

School Turnaround AmeriCorps FAQ

ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

1. Are individual schools and individual school districts eligible to apply to the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition?

Yes, individual schools and individual school districts are eligible to apply. Organizations planning to operate an AmeriCorps program in a single state must apply through a State Commission. A single-state applicant will be instructed by a State Commission to apply directly to CNCS if the Commission is not accepting applications for grants under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (*Notice*).

2. Are State Education Agencies (SEAs) eligible to apply for School Turnaround AmeriCorps funds to support programming in School Improvement Grants (SIG)/Priority Schools? Or must the applicants be Local Education Agencies (LEAs)?

Both SEAs and LEAs are eligible to apply. Organizations planning to operate an AmeriCorps program in a single state must apply through a State Commission. A single-state applicant will be instructed by a State Commission to apply directly to CNCS if the Commission is not accepting applications for grants under this *Notice*. The list of State and Territory Commissions can be found here:

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>.

3. We are a nonprofit organization and wanted to know if we are eligible to apply to the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition?

Yes, nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Organizations planning to operate an AmeriCorps program in a single state must apply through a State Commission. A single-state applicant will be instructed by a State Commission to apply directly to CNCS if the Commission is not accepting applications for grants under this *Notice*. Organizations planning to operate a School Turnaround AmeriCorps program in more than one state must apply directly to CNCS.

4. We are a for-profit company, may we apply?

No, you must be an eligible organization to apply. Eligible organizations include: public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; schools or LEAs; institutions of higher education; government entities within states (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; and labor organizations.

5. Can we apply on behalf of multiple schools?

A lead applicant may apply on behalf of multiple schools if each school meets the eligible school criteria as indicated in the *Notice*.

6. Do we have to decide in advance how many AmeriCorps members would be placed at each school?

While an applicant does not need to decide in advance how many AmeriCorps members will be placed at each school, the applicant will need to specify in the proposal how many members they are requesting.

7. If we already applied for AmeriCorps funding as an organization that serves SIG schools through the AmeriCorps State and National NOFO that closed on February 6, 2013, is there any way that that application could be referred for funding considerations through the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition? Or do we have to submit a new application?

You must submit an application via the School Turnaround AmeriCorps Notice to be considered for funding through the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition. An application from any other grant competition cannot be transferred into the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition-you must submit the application according to

the School Turnaround AmeriCorps *Notice*.

8. We applied as a National Direct applicant under the AmeriCorps State and National NOFO that closed on February 6, 2013. For the School Turnaround AmeriCorps competition, we are considering applying for a StateCompetitivegrant for just one of our locations. Is it possible to compete for both National Direct and State Competitive funding through separate applications?

Yes, it is possible to compete for multiple competitions. While an applicant may submit more than one application for the same project through separate competitions, CNCS may not provide more than one grant to support the same project.

9. Is it possible that we could be awarded funding through the AmeriCorps State and National NOFO that closed on February 6, 2013 and the School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant competition if we submit two separate applications that are both recommended for funding?

Both applications can only be funded if the proposed projects are different. While an applicant may submit more than one application for the same project to separate competitions, CNCS may not provide more than one grant to support the same project.

ELIGIBLE SCHOOL(S)

10. The School Turnaround *Notice* invites applications for AmeriCorps grants from eligible organizations that improve academic outcomes for students in eligible schools. Is a school only eligible if it's receiving or will receive SIG funds or is designated as a Priority School according to our respective state?

Correct, an eligible school is one that is receiving or will receive SIG funds or designated as a Priority School according to your respective state.

For purposes of this *Notice*, eligible schools are defined as Tier I and Tier II schools that are receiving SIG funds to implement one of the four SIG models; Tier I and Tier II schools that, at the time of the application submission, have been formally notified that they will receive SIG funds to implement a SIG model in the 2013-2014 school year; and priority schools that are implementing in the 2012-2013 school year or will implement in the 2013-2014 school year interventions aligned with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility turnaround principles.

For a complete list of eligible schools, please follow the provided link:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/awardedschls.xls>

11. Are all Tier I and Tier II schools listed on the published listing of SIG schools considered "eligible schools" regardless of which cohort they are listed under?

Correct, all Tier I and Tier II schools are eligible.

12. Our understanding is that School Turnaround AmeriCorps members can only serve in eligible schools. How do we find out which schools might receive funding for 2013-2014?

To find out which schools might receive SIG funding for 2013-2014, you will have to contact the relevant SEA. While some SEAs plan to make new awards for the coming school year, it is possible that award decisions might not be made before the School Turnaround AmeriCorps application deadline. We recommend getting in contact with the SEA to obtain more information about their plans/timelines.

13. Is eligibility limited to only the "turnaround" models?

Eligibility is not limited to only the "turnaround" model. Schools that are receiving SIG funds to implement any of the four SIG models are eligible.

14. Can organizations that fit all of the applicant criteria, but do not work with Tier I or Tier II SIG-awarded schools, apply? In other words, does an organization have to work in a SIG-awarded Tier I or Tier II school(s) to be eligible

for funding?

To be eligible to apply, an applicant must serve eligible schools as defined in the *Notice*.

15. Can feeder pattern schools that pipeline into eligible schools be served under this *Notice*?

Each school served must meet the eligibility requirements in its own right. A feeder school must be an eligible school in order to qualify.

16. Can Tier III schools apply?

No, Tier III schools do not meet the eligible school criteria.

17. For this competition, must applicants simply be SIG schools at the time of application? Or must they be SIG schools when the funds are allocated?

You must be an eligible school at the time of the application due date: April 23, 2013.

18. Can you please tell me if preschool programs in elementary schools would be appropriate for this grant opportunity?

Yes, preschool programs in an eligible elementary school would be appropriate for this grant opportunity.

19. My school currently has other national service programs. Does this make my school ineligible?

No, this does not make your school ineligible; however to be considered eligible for funds, the schools that will participate in grant activities must be identified in the application and demonstrate that they will serve eligible schools that: 1) are not currently served by a national service program (e.g. AmeriCorps State and National, VISTA, or Foster Grandparents Program), or, 2) will support expansion and better coordination of existing national service activities in those schools.

HOW TO APPLY

20. When does CNCS expect to make awards?

We anticipate announcing the results of this competition no later than mid-July 2013. The grants will be awarded following the grant selection announcement.

21. Am I a single-state applicant?

You are considered a single-state applicant if you will operate a School Turnaround AmeriCorps program only in one state and are not an Indian Tribe.

22. The competition information asks if we are applying as a state or multi-state program. We are neither; we are a public high school. Are we eligible to apply?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity. You are considered a single-state applicant given that you will be operating only in one state.

23. What do you mean by "applicants must contact their state commission?"

As stated on page 11 of the *Notice*, organizations that propose to operate in only one state must apply directly to that state's State Commission. Single-state applicants must contact the State Commission for state-specific deadlines and application instructions. A single-state applicant will be instructed by a State Commission to apply directly to CNCS if the Commission is not accepting applications for grants under this *Notice*.

Given that a school would likely be operating only in one state, they would need to contact their State Commission

if they are interested in applying.

24. If I am applying as a single-state applicant via my State Commission, to whom do we submit the supporting attachments listed on page 13 of the *Notice*?

Single-state applicants applying to a State Commission must submit all materials to the State Commission only.

25. If our school district applies, do we contact the State Commission regarding an application?

Yes, you must contact your State Commission for state-specific deadlines and application instructions. You will be instructed by a State Commission to apply directly to CNCS if the Commission is not accepting applications for grants under this *Notice*.

26. Is there a page limit?

Yes, applications may not exceed 20 double-spaced pages for the narratives, including the executive summary and cover page, as printed out from eGrants. This limit does not include the budget and performance measures or any of the required supplementary materials (e.g., letters of support).

Reviewers will not consider any material over the page limit, even if eGrants allows applicants to enter and submit text over the limit. Therefore, CNCS recommends that applicants print out their application from the "Review and Submit" page in eGrants prior to final submission to ensure it is not over the 20-page limit.

MEMBER ACTIVITIES

30. Must all proposed grant-related activities take place at the school?

While the *Notice* does not prohibit activities from taking place off-campus, providing services that are based exclusively at a community-based organization is not permitted. These types of activities can only be done in addition to activities that are school-based. An applicant proposing to have members serve a portion of their time at a community-based location must demonstrate that the community-based activities are aligned with the school turnaround plan and that grant funds would be used to support students from eligible schools.

31. In what kinds of activities can members participate?

AmeriCorps members can participate in a number of activities; however, there are also activities that are explicitly prohibited (45 CFR § 2520.65). Additionally, program service activities conducted by the members must not violate the non-displacement provisions (45 CFR §2540.100).

Member activities should be evidence-based and align with comprehensive school turnaround plans. All grants funded under this *Notice* must include one or more of the following:

- Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement;
- Establishing a school culture and environment that improves school safety, attendance, and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs;
- Accelerating students' acquisition of reading and mathematics knowledge and skills;
- Increasing graduation rates through strategies such as early warning systems, credit-recovery programs, and re-engagement strategies;
- Increasing college enrollment rates through college preparation counseling assistance to include completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and college applications, and educating students and their families on financial literacy for college; or

- Supporting school implementation of increased learning time.

32. Must every applicant select priority measure ED2 and/or ED4A?

Applicants must choose one output (either ED2 or ED4A) and then **at least one** of the corresponding outcomes. The opt-in rules found on page 29 of the *Notice* provides guidance to applicants by indicating the required or recommended pairing, or alignment, of output and outcome measures.

33. Is the School Turnaround AmeriCorps initiative a program that full-time undergraduate students can participate in while attending school?

There are no prohibitions against School Turnaround AmeriCorps members attending school full-time.

34. Where can I find the Code of Federal Regulations pertaining to the AmeriCorps programs?

CNCS has issued regulations in Chapters 12 and 25 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal regulations. The full regulations are available online at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ed29639297eef4a78d3e342eeca4214f&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45tab_02.tpl.

35. If we were to be awarded a grant, would all of our AmeriCorps members have to work in the same location? Or could they work at different schools across the state?

AmeriCorps members can work at different schools across the state as long as all the schools are eligible as defined in the *Notice*.

36. Must AmeriCorps members be active directly in the classroom or can they also be part of an after-school program?

Activities may be in the classroom and/or after school.

PROGRAM SIZE

37. Can you please tell me how many grants you intend to award for this program?

CNCS and ED expect to make annual grant awards between \$250,000 and \$1,000,000 for cost reimbursement grants and between \$16,000 and \$80,000 for education-award fixed-amount grants. CNCS and ED expect to make a total of \$5 million available for this grant competition. The actual level of funding is subject to the availability of full-year appropriations.

38. What is the minimum and maximum amount of members required? Is there a limit?

CNCS does not have a required minimum or maximum number of members that an applicant can request, and there is also no limit. However, there are some general guidelines to consider. Applicants are encouraged to apply for a minimum of 20 Member Service Years (MSYs). In addition, new organizations should submit applications with the understanding that the general practice is to award no more than 50 MSYs to new grantees. For award size limitations, please refer to the maximum cost per MSY requirements found on page 10 of the *Notice*.

39. Will an application be considered if it does not request a minimum of 20 MSYs?

Yes, the application will be considered if an applicant is requesting less than 20 MSYs. 20 MSYs is a recommendation, not a requirement.

40. Are MSY requests for the duration of the three year grant period or should they be considered as an annual request? For example, can an applicant apply for 8-10 MSY in year one and 10 MSY in year two and three?

The budget and MSY request is per year. CNCS cannot guarantee that the opportunity to grow or expand will be

available. The proposed model may not be feasible in subsequent years.

41. When applicants are encouraged to apply for 20 MSYs, does that mean 20 full-time members?

Applicants have flexibility in how they fulfill their MSYs. Each member type: full-time (FT), half-time (HT), reduced HT, quarter time, and minimum time, has a corresponding MSY value as indicated on page 37 of the Application Instructions. In order to calculate the total MSY, multiply the number of members by the MSY value. For example, if you wanted 5 FT, 20 PT, and 30 minimum time members, the calculation would be as follows: $(5 \times 1) + (20 \times 0.5) + (30 \times 0.21164022)$ for a total of 21.35 MSY.

42. Can we begin our program in one school with the intention of growing the program in the initial three years of the grant?

CNCS cannot guarantee that the opportunity to grow or expand will be available. The proposed model may not be feasible in subsequent years.

BUDGET and MATCH

46. What is the maximum living allowance for a one-year half-time member? On page 9 of the *Notice*, Table 1 indicates that the maximum for one-year half-time members is \$12,800. However, Table 2 on page 10 states that the maximum amount per MSY for the Individual Competitive State Program (cost-reimbursement) is \$13,300. Is this amount only for those applicants who are applying directly through their State?

The two figures referenced are separate topics. The figure provided on page 9 is the maximum living allowance that an AmeriCorps member may receive. The living allowance is a stipend that is paid to the AmeriCorps member. The information in Table 2 on page 10 is the maximum grant amount that the organization can request. This represents the amount of grant funds you may receive from CNCS. The grant funds provided to an organization are intended to cover program costs such as AmeriCorps member support and program operating costs.

47. The *Notice* indicates matching requirements. Can this be in the value of support personnel or is there an absolute cash obligation?

Matching funds can be cash or in-kind contributions.

48. Table 1 on page 9 of the *Notice* indicates that the maximum total living allowance for one-year half-time members is \$12,800. Is this amount for one half-time member or is the amount calculated per MSY? For example, would an applicant need to split the \$12,800 between two half-time positions?

The maximum living allowance is for one member only. It is not calculated per MSY.

49. Can SIG funds be used to satisfy the School Turnaround AmeriCorps match requirement?

The US Department of Education has determined that SIG funds can be used as match for a School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant, if the use of SIG funds is otherwise allowable under the SIG requirements and is in accordance with the cost principles governing the SIG program. For example, an SEA may allocate some or all of the SIG funds it set aside for administration, evaluation, and technical assistance to satisfy the match requirement of the School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant. However, the SEA may not set aside additional SIG funds to meet the match, because doing so would violate the SIG final requirement that at least 95% of SIG funds be awarded to LEAs.

50. Will funds from this initiative allow for the purchase and use of additional resources (such as curriculum and other classroom materials) for AmeriCorps members to use at their turnaround schools, or will it only cover the expenses of the AmeriCorps member's placement there, leaving the school to cover any additional costs?

Grants funds may be used to pay for AmeriCorps member support costs and program operating costs such as: personnel, staff travel, member travel, supplies, staff training, member training, evaluation etc. The awarded funding amount will not cover all costs; at a minimum you will need to meet the cost share requirements. The match requirements can be found on page 7 of the *Notice*.

Grants under this program, except for EAP grants, are subject to the applicable Cost Principles under OMB Circulars A-21 (2 CFR Part 220), A-122 (2 CFR Part 230), or A-87 (2 CFR Part 225). All grants are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements for grants under A-102 (45 CFR Part 2541) or A-110 (45 CFR 2543 or 2 CFR Part 21) and OMB Circular A-133, pertaining to the Single Audit Act.

The maximum amount of grant funds you will receive is also something to review. You will find award amount information on page 5 of the *Notice*. Additionally for award size limitations, please refer to the maximum cost per MSY requirements on page 9 of the Notice.

School Turnaround AmeriCorps Evidence for Aligned and Rigorous Interventions